



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS DISTRICTS (EBD)

Environmental Benefits Districts are places where State government and other stakeholders can focus their financial, technical, regulatory, administrative, policy and other appropriate resources to benefit targeted communities. The EBD initiative was developed by MDE to foster sound environmental practices, healthy and safe communities, and proactive economic development for all Marylanders. The approach emphasizes concentrating state resources in targeted communities. It intends to encourage more effective governance by allowing, where appropriate, communities to sit face-to-face with several State and/or local agencies. This can provide a symbolic one-stop-shop opportunity to resolve concerns and facilitate a clear and consistent message. The concept acknowledges that many of the needed programs to protect and revitalize communities are in existence, albeit not focused or coordinated in some cases. EBDs provide the geographic focus and needs identification to make some existing programs more successful.

The Priority Funding Areas (PFAs) Act of 1997 and Executive Order 01.01.2003.33 (“Maryland’s Priority Places Strategy”), suggest that State agencies in Maryland should prioritize their focus within PFAs to enable sound land use policy, economic growth, community revitalization, and environmental protection. EBDs will assist state agencies to achieve the visions of the PFA Act of 1997 and Executive Order 01.01.2003.33. They build on the foundations of land development and community revitalization and those adopted as Maryland State policy in the 1992 Growth Act and the Maryland Brownfields Act of 1997.

BENEFITS TO STAKEHOLDERS

Environment and Government

- Proactive environmental protection and significant state role in stimulating local economies;
- Create “smarter” growth and stabilize poor and disenfranchised communities;
- Influence the location of some types of development – encourage development where governments want to target their efforts;
- Identification of communities that are most in need;
- Proactive collaboration among state, business, local government, and communities;
- More efficient use of state, local, community, and business resources – including land use; and,
- Geographic focus and needs identification to make some existing programs more successful.

Businesses

- Provide opportunities for economic development, innovation, and small business growth with community and state support. This also creates a positive image and relationship with community;
- Accessible labor pools and utilization of existing incentives and resources to offset some costs;
- Better understanding and greater support of management activities, industry procedures, state policies, and community issues; and,
- Reduce delays and costs associated with opposition and litigation to targeted projects.

Community

- Strategic and prioritized attention from state/local government and businesses;
- Opportunities for input into decision-making and the generation of community goodwill;
- Revitalize and stabilize poor and at risk communities and their neighborhoods; and,
- Employment opportunities and better relationships with government and business.

TARGETING AND RESOURCE IDENTIFICATION

A first step in targeting EBDs will be the identification of state and other resources that can assist in focusing state efforts in targeted communities. For examples, site assessment and redevelopment of qualified brownfields sites; service delivery operations such as drinking and clean-water infrastructure improvements; alternative environmental technologies; concentrated outreach to bus companies and fleet owners to secure commitment to improve operation by using cleaner diesel fuel, alternative fuel (such as compressed natural gas [CNG]), and retrofitting dirty diesel engines with devices to reduce pollution; fish tissue advisories; targeted enforcement; and, compliance assistance, etc.), are resources that exist within MDE. State programs weighted toward rebuilding communities (such as the Sidewalk Retrofit Program and Neighborhood Business Development Program), have important services that could make EBDs a model for rebuilding and sustaining communities across Maryland. Other State agencies such as the Departments of Planning, Natural Resources, Economic Development, Transportation, and Health, etc., could likely play a role in this venture.

METHODOLOGY AND TENETS OF EBDs

- State, local governments, and communities identify potential EBDs;
- EBD committee led by MDE with MDP, DNR, DBED, DHCD, and MDOT, local government etc.;
- EBD committee along with other stakeholders such as private foundations and agencies, non profits, and communities undertake preliminary needs assessment;
- Project implementation to include community-based input that gives residents and other stakeholders a seat at the table with state agencies and businesses to decide what types of protection and development best serve their needs; and,
- The EBD committee and stakeholders identify appropriate resources that can increase the effectiveness of potential projects and opportunities to revitalize and sustain communities;

CRITERIA for EBDs

EBDs should exhibit at least five of the following criteria (see EBD white paper for additional criteria):

- Strive to attain and complement the State's Priority Places six initiatives;
- Demonstrate an environmental justice or disadvantage concern;
- Areas where local government, legislator, and communities will support an EBD initiative;
- Demonstrate a need and/or possess the potential for economic development opportunities;
- Demonstrate capacity development or are willing to get support to improve capacity development
- Currently located within the state priority funding area
- Communities with landfills, failing water, wastewater and sewer, transportation, housing, economic, etc., infrastructure systems (potential risk to public health and welfare); and,
- Communities located in a county or municipality that has elected to participate in the Brownfields Revitalization incentive program in accordance with § 5-1408(a) of this subtitle.

SUMMARY

EBDs will work to enhance the quality of life in communities through a new vision of environmental protection and economic development. They seek to improve the quality of life of all communities that are looking for a greater voice in determining the future of their neighborhoods. EBDs intend to increase the support and effectiveness of state and local government programs by taking an integrated and proactive approach to rebuild and sustain communities. EBDs recognize that many of the programs needed to rebuild and sustain communities do exist, but at times are not focused or coordinated. It will provide the geographic focus and needs identification to make some existing programs more successful.

The EBD strategies will help citizens, local and state governments to achieve some of the goals of Governor Ehrlich's Priority Places Strategy and key initiatives. Environmental protection and community revitalization require a transition from poorly managed areas to sound environmental and planning practices that create and maintain protection from environmental insults, natural systems, proactive business culture, improved infrastructure, and a celebration of communities.